

Key Performance Indicators

With Christmas only days away, it is a great time to reflect on how things have gone in 2019.

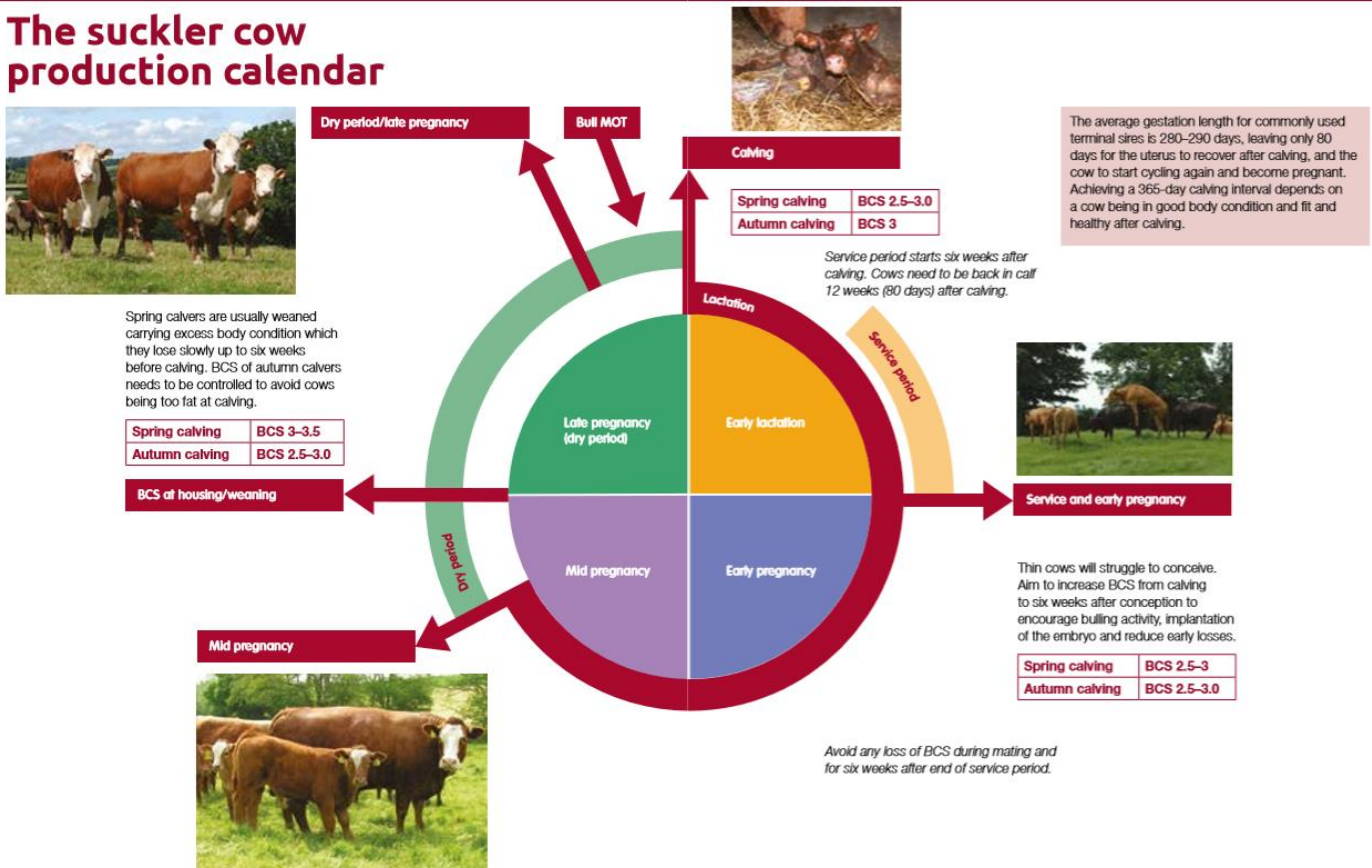
Key Performance indicators (KPIs) are the main figures used to assess the factors that are important for the success of a suckler enterprise. Once measured, the KPI for a farm can be compared with local or national averages, in a process known as benchmarking. It is important that we consider all aspects of herd efficiency, not only due to its effect on the financial performance but also on how it impacts the environment.


As we have done over the past couple of years, we will start our 2020 meeting calendar with a benchmarking session in which people will be able to compare themselves anonymously with the group as a whole. Whilst this may be interesting to track performance, it also allows us

to identify strengths and weaknesses in different farms. The discussion and the exchange of ideas between the group members has been helpful in identifying the key areas to focus on with regards to making improvements on the businesses that attend. Some of you may remember this from last year and now some farms we will be able to compare with the performance over the last three years.

To facilitate this, we have a form for completion available on request by email (and [also on our website](#)) to provide some information about the performance of your herd. We will then anonymously compare the results from all farms and produce a chart for each farm individually outlining where they fall within the group. The data collection form enclosed includes 20 of the data points we have decided to focus on from the long list recommended by AHDB.

The suckler cow production calendar





Focusing on cost can often be a scary place to start but this is key to knowing if your cows are making you money. This is especially important with the changing situation surrounding single farm payments.

Keeping a suckler cow for a year will cost in the region of £500-£900 so making sure each cow produces a calf every year is vital to maintaining profitability. As such, determining the pregnancy status of cows as soon as possible after the bull has been taken out allows barren animals to be sold, turning them from a cost into a source of income.

Whilst it may be tempting to run the bull for longer, to try and sweep up any barren cows, this will extend the block and those calves produced will be less valuable than the earlier pregnancies. Within the production cycle it is very difficult to get an animal to



calve earlier, and so generally animals get later and later in the block over their productive lives. It takes a cow at least 42 days to return to cycling after calving. So, once the 9 months of pregnancy is added, the window for them to conceive inside a year becomes very short!

Culling should be seen as a useful tool and not as a failure. Removing that cow transforms her from a cost to an income stream. However, the following should be considered:

- Is she calving at the correct time?
- Do her calves perform well?
- What is her health status?
- Is she easy to work with?

Record keeping may be one of the driest and most boring subjects to talk about; however, paying some attention to this can yield great reward. From some relatively rudimentary records, important information about a farm can be gleaned which can inform management

decisions going forward. A lot of beneficial statistics can be produced from data on the numbers of stock kept, numbers of cows PD positive, date of each cow calving and whether calf was alive, and dates and numbers at weaning.

To help with data recording we have produced a calving recording template that allows you to record all the important health information that is required. You can download a [print version from the website](#) or request an editable form from us via email. It is quite straightforward but if you have any questions speak to one of us.

One way in which this data can be of use is in a barren cow audit. Following PD, the empty cows are looked at for any trends. This can reveal issues such as heifer management or older cows needing to be culled. Any trends in the barren cows can then become the focus of management for the next breeding season.

Meeting dates

20th Jan 'Beef Suckler KPIs meeting'

Royal Oak Presbury, Cheltenham GL52 3DL

22nd Jan 'Beef Suckler KPIs meeting'

The Farmers Table, Tortworth. GL12 8HF

23th Jan 'Key learnings from Canada'

AHBD meeting - Avebury Social Club SN8 1RD

If you are interested in any of these please let us know.

Kat, Bea, Ben
and Geth

**Wishing everyone a
Merry Christmas and
a prosperous
New Year!**

